



Tribune

Community Spirit members (clockwise from top left) Rolin Heytvelt, Douglas Schurman, Daniel Hunter, Wilford Gotts and John Sullivan.

Community Spirit: It's a blast

By Lorraine Nelson
of the Tribune

As a child, John Sullivan watched the annual fireworks display at Clarkston from across the Snake River at Lewiston's McSorley School.

It was a tradition.

"I remember waiting forever for the fireworks to go off," he said in an interview earlier this week.

Then in 1986 the big show was missing.

It had become a hardship on the Clarkston Jaycees — both to raise the money for the show and to find volunteers to help with the celebration.

Enter Community Spirit.

"I didn't want my kids not to be able to see that," Sullivan said.

Former Lewiston resident George McPherson, then sales director of radio stations KMOK-FM and KRLC-AM, spearheaded the effort to form Community Spirit in 1987 to keep the fireworks show alive, Sullivan said.

This evening's show at Clarkston's Adams Field will be Community Spirit's fifth show, including their contribution to last year's joint show with Lewiston to celebrate Idaho's Centennial.

George McPherson was a volunteer firefighter for the Clarkston Fire Department, which explains why many of today's Community Spirit members are in some way connected to the fire department.

"We're a group of individuals who want to see fireworks go off," Sullivan said, explaining the sole purpose of the

Blast

nonprofit organization.

"It's the only annual visible sign of patriotism," said Sullivan of Sullivan's American Insurance Agency of Lewiston.

"I don't know of any other thing that focuses our attention on independence, who we are as a nation," he added.

The other members were less sentimental in explaining their involvement.

Clarkston firefighter Rolin Heytvelt joked there is a bit of pyromania in every firefighter, but said more seriously the explosives are simply pretty and they give him shivers.

"It makes you feel good," Heytvelt said.

Another Clarkston firefighter and member, Dave McConnell, said, "I really got interested in it because I didn't want to see them quit."

McConnell said he had fireworks as a kid but he no longer believes in fireworks at home because of their danger. Instead, he would rather see people donate their money for a community show.

Dan Hunter of Lewiston agreed.

"Community Spirit used to sell fireworks (as a fund-raiser) and maybe will again, but hopefully not because it takes a lot of manpower," Hunter said.

A growing number of Community Spirit members feel they'd rather see money donated to a community show than spent on individual fireworks, he said.

Hunter got involved because he happens to be married to a fire department captain, Kathy Hopfner, and somebody asked him for help.

Hunter said his idea of a Fourth of July celebration is to have a fun day of events in the

Fireworks show has new music and production

Community Spirit's fireworks show at Clarkston will be electronically produced for the first time this year and choreographed to patriotic music.

Those viewing the show out of earshot of Adams Field at Clarkston High School can tune into KMOK-FM and KRLC-AM to hear the music.

The Spokane division of Pyro Spectaculars Northwest of Seattle has the contract for the \$10,000 event.

Gates to Adams Field open between 6 and 7 p.m., with entertainment and a small

ground show preceding the 10 p.m. aerial display.

New Washington state regulations are limiting the shells to 4 inches this year, which can't lift as much weight as the usual 6-inch mortars the organization prefers. Community Spirit members recommend viewing the show from a closer spot this year.

Refreshments will be sold by Twin City Twirlers.

Donations for the event will be accepted at the gate or can be mailed to: Community Spirit, P.O. Box 235, Clarkston, Wash. 99403.